

## **Convention Center Cultural District Planning Sessions**

August 4 &5, Raleigh Urban Design Center

### *Goals:*

- To identify opportunities and constraints to be addressed during the September Charrettes
- To obtain an understanding of developer interests
- To obtain an understanding of stakeholder interests

### **Session 1: Surrounding Areas**

#### *Key Attributes Now:*

- It's a destination
- Commanding views, especially of South End
- Good vehicular access
- There is potential- though it's not clearly defined
- The area is changing
- ArtSpace is nearby
- Hassle free to get into and move around the city
- Power base for NC- decisions are being made here
- Mix of single family neighborhoods on periphery
- Diversity of building types
- Variety of housing types
- City is evolving into a first tier city
- Chavis Park is great! Recreation, greenways, carousel
- People move here from other places because of access to green space
- Glenwood South is a model for Raleigh because it is accelerating

#### *Concerns:*

- No grocery store
- Negative perception of downtown, e.g. one way streets are confusing
- Downtown is poorly defined
- People don't know how to park
- It seems like there is nothing to do in downtown
- All needs are met in the suburbs, so why come into the city?
- Downtown housing places are not connected to anything green
- There is no nail salon
- Downtown is not considered part of everyday life

#### *What Would You Like to See:*

- Great places to walk
- Recognition of the multicultural nature of our city now and how it will continue to change in that way- we should bridge the new diversity of the city with the strong historical background of Raleigh

- We need a spectrum of housing types, various prices, student housing and housing for young and empty nesters, affordable
- Beautiful parks, green space
- Museums are key attraction
- The BEST shopping, maybe clustered together
- Theater- small fourplex would guarantee traffic
- 'Cool' factor has to be there
- Low hassle factor
- Block east of current Civic Center would include Pope House museum, MLK Resource Center, CIAA Museum, African American Cultural Center; this could be a place for a broader global conversation
- Marketing, branding is very important
- The downtown is not too big- the bookends, or anchors are the museums, then we should fill in the middle
- Linkage with the historically black colleges- Shaw and St. Augustine's
- NC State should develop student housing downtown
- Connection to Pullen Park
- Would it be possible to have water downtown?
- Build off of the City of Oaks or Park with a City in it theme
- Famous downtown walks in addition to the Capital City Trail
- People movers? Trolley?
- A flagship library (The State Library and Shaw's Library are already downtown. Could we piggyback with one of them?)
- Water feature is needed
- Nail salon- would go great near new Progress Energy building

*Other Thoughts:*

- ◆ We should find the documents from the proposal for Pan American games- they may be helpful
- ◆ Let's look at open space plans for Raleigh and the Triangle
- ◆ Competing with suburbs in retail and open space won't happen- it's a different market

**Session 2: Convention Center/Hotel**

*Key Attributes Now:*

- Great attendance at events (350,000 people/year at BTI Center and 300,000 people/year at CC)
- The Alive After Five space is great
- Shaw University has a very nice campus with 2,400 students now, maybe 5,000 students in the coming years
- The Convention Center Plaza works really well- it has a 3,000- 4,000 maximum capacity
- The BTI Center is active almost every night, it's a very successful venue
- The view from the southwest is an iconic view of downtown- you can even see the State Capitol

*Concerns:*

- There are not enough hotel rooms within walking distance- Downtown Charlotte has 4,100 downtown rooms while Raleigh only has 755 rooms(2 hotels)
- People aren't walking around the city enough- Where can we walk to?
- The walk from the warehouse district to the South End is not perceived as safe; it is not inviting and there are not enough people around
- Constant parking problems; this will continue to be an issue because parking is not always appropriately located
- Entertainment zone is not busy enough- people come out of hotels to areas of low street level activity
- The BTI Center needs parking for about 100 performers plus production staff plus attendees- when you add the new Convention Center, parking will be a major issue
- Areas nearby feel disconnected from the South End
- Event related parking in the area on Thursday, Friday, Saturday costs over \$70,000 a year
- It's difficult to close streets- some merchants object

*What You Would Like to See:*

- Space for trailer storage for BTI shows
- Shuttle around town to connect places and areas of town
- Good signage to get to other areas- people need to know where to go and how close things really are
- We should create flow from the Convention Center to other downtown activities
- Opportunities for conventioners to get out of the building and create more private sector investment
- Conventioners should be able to walk out of the building and see a vibrant, active, unique urban environment
- Close attention to buildings that will face the convention center
- Sites #1 and #2 should draw conventioners, maybe through entertainment and shopping
- Emphasize the east-west linkages through town- connect the districts
- Use of BTI plaza
- Connection to Centennial Campus is crucial- there are potentially 20,000 employees
- Water feature near downtown
- Public safety is a concern on empty streets
- We need an outdoor venue though we want to make sure not that it doesn't compete with the BTI Center
- The site to the west of the new Civic Center could be used for outdoor events, though there would be lots of traffic noise there
- There needs to be more activities downtown- this area should become a 24 hour, 7 days a week, vibrant neighborhood
- Goal: to have 10,000 people living downtown
- 'Districts' should be multi-purpose and linked together
- There could be a lot of short term residential demands in this area from legislators and lobbyists- this could be a great area for this type of housing
- We want to be able to tie many functions together- tourism, conventions, universities, etc.

- If parking is buried, there should be vertical connections to subterranean parking.

*Other Thoughts:*

- ♦ With festivals, sound is an issue
- ♦ Roads are not always a great place for festivals because the space is too linear
- ♦ But the Flea Market and the Farmer's Market work on linear sites, but these aren't performances
- ♦ Parks are not usable for festivals
- ♦ "This is not about making the Convention Center a success, it is about making downtown successful"
- ♦ Luxury condos cannot be built on top of Hooter's- it would be too noisy; but housing can be built on top of a fine dining restaurant
- ♦ The mediation between ground level shops and the entry to housing above may need to be carefully designed
- ♦ The connection of the south with MLK Blvd/Western Blvd is very important
- ♦ The opening of Fayetteville St. Mall and the Progress Energy Building will help to bring people to the area
- ♦ Will Shaw University build a new arena near the Civic Center? These two sites will have a lot of impact on each other
- ♦ There are many opportunities to do a lot more in the area, but everything will be problematic by causing new traffic and parking issues
- ♦ The plan for Fayetteville St. includes performance venues
- ♦ The merchants who site themselves on the new Fayetteville St. may be more open to street closings because the street being open most of the time will be much better than the current situation
- ♦ A by-product of the new Convention Center will be to create more activity
- ♦ By 2008 the TTA Rail will be built- the next stop from this area will be the NC State Campus

### **Session 3: Housing**

*Key Attributes Now:*

- The Community Development discussed current and future housing projects noting that most Community Development activities through the city are on the east side of Downtown.
  - Jamaica Drive is an 84 unit mixed income rental development near Saunders North
  - Carlton Place is a mixed income development being built just east of Downtown
- The Raleigh Housing Authority shared their success stories of the past few years and shared future plans for around Downtown.
  - Chavis Heights is about to be redeveloped
  - Halifax Court has 163 units

- Walnut Terrace- 300 units
- Heritage Park
- 1 bedroom units are in high demand
- RHA works on a four year cycle
- Capitol Park was on time and under budget- a very successful project!

*What You Would Like to See:*

- More mixed income housing
- Ice skating rink
- Family friendly activities
- Retail
- Major library
- Water feature close to or in downtown
- Dancing fountain or other fun water activity for kids because they love water
- Movie theater
- Contemporary Science Center

**Session 5: Property Owners/Business**

*Key Attributes Now:*

- Low crime rate
- Great weather
- Shaw University has a well articulated thoughtful plan for its expansion north and south

*Concerns:*

- Ingress and egress into and out of Downtown are critical, both for general reasons and emergencies
- Downtown has two strong dual functions- Business/Government and Entertainment/Arts; where these two uses begin to overlap creates conflict
- Perception of crime in the area
- Social services attract panhandlers
- Negative perception of Downtown derives from the presence of panhandlers; currently there are no ordinances against them
- No sense of arrival into downtown
- Lack of affordable housing
- People use the railroad bed to cross Western because it is so dangerous
- Many car break ins at Chamber of Commerce and NCAE
- Traffic will increase with new development
- Parking decks tend to CAUSE traffic problems- people entering and having to fish for change; this problem can be managed
- Shuttles to and from the airport are not yet economical
- Demand for housing in Downtown Raleigh exceeds supply, driving prices upward

*What You Would Like to See:*

- Restaurants

- Relocation of social services to mitigate problems with panhandlers
- Outdoor activities including outdoor dining
- Quaint shops, quaint cafes
- Streetcars, trolleys
- Transit access to the area from outside of it- a means to get to work and to get around
- Coordination of parking programs throughout the Downtown
- People would like to have the ability to walk around the area comfortably
- Buildings should incorporate sustainable design features
- Signage and formal entrance into downtown
- Parking must be identified with good signage
- Row houses and townhouses need to be built close
- Density is acceptable in this area
- Boutique shopping and attractive cafes at site #1
- Site #1 should be a big draw
- This area should be attractive and upscale
- Parking should be accommodated around site #6
- Affordable housing
- We will need to work to control rising housing prices
- Waterfronts are strong attractions in cities- what could we do to create something like this?
- A symbol that distinguishes us and builds our identity is needed- 'Oaks' vs. 'The Capital'
- Sir Walter Raleigh could be a unique symbol
- Security is critical in the area- the area around the railroad tracks should be well maintained
- Raleigh Business and Technology Center needs more parking

*Other Thoughts:*

- ◆ Shaw University shared its vision for expansion to the north and south, which focuses on quality before quantity and attention to urban design principles
- ◆ Shaw University currently has room for 800 students in its old dorms, will add space for up to 500 students in new dorms
- ◆ "When we build for affordability, this affordability won't last for long unless city programs exist that will help to keep that housing affordable."
- ◆ Sheraton visitors self park; there is no valet parking yet
- ◆ "It's not the building, it's the package."

## **Session 6: Transportation/Parking**

*Key Attributes Now:*

- Water and sewer capacity will accommodate new development
- New TTA Light Rail station will be sited at western end of Hargett St.
- TTA's plans go beyond Parking Studies, they are planning for a network of access and a system of mobility

- Between Hargett and Martin, Salisbury and Wilmington, the road is being narrowed to allow expansion of the sidewalks on the south side of the street; this will allow the creation of on-street dining.

*Concerns:*

- NCAE and Chamber of Commerce Properties are suburban in the middle of an urban area
- The main approach into the city from the south is NOT attractive
- We should avoid creating ‘gerbil tubes’ where people can go directly from parking to Convention Center without ever being on the street
- Traffic moves too quickly on the one way streets

*What You Would Like To See:*

- East Trans System could go south with a stop near Shaw and maybe the Chamber of Commerce/NCAE sites- this system would be used primarily for peak trips in the morning and afternoon
- Public transit
- Along the McDowell-Dawson one-way pair, explore the use of overpass vs. on-street connections.
- Creation of a good experience for people who will drive into the city, especially from the southwest
- There may be opportunities for medians on certain streets in the Downtown
- Buildings could have a ground floor setback to create an arcade- this way people could be protected from the elements while still walking on the street from parking to attractions
- Along the Mc-Dowell-Dawson pair, good intersection design is critical to establish strong pedestrian connections- use of bump-outs, crosswalks, etc.
- The development community would like to see one way streets converted to two way streets in order to build residential units- the traffic has got to move at less than 35 mph
- Fayetteville Street will FAIL if does not connect through to the BTI Center
- People need to be able to drive by the front door of their destination; the street should NOT be a cul-de-sac
- The area should be interesting to walk around
- Street between sites #2 and #3 should have a plaza feel
- Rails built into Fayetteville Street for a possible trolley or streetcar
- Exploration of mid-block crossings is important for pedestrian connections though this may not be feasible for several years
- Exploration of mid-block alleys
- Movie theater
- Health club
- Daycare facility
- Library
- Bakeries
- Grocery store
- Flower shops
- Butcher shops
- Museums are essential- the Contemporary Art Museum has just opened, Children’s museum

- Thoughtful open space plan for Downtown
- Public library
- The street should offer a variety of sensory experiences
- The design of buildings should be interesting so that people will like to walk by them
- What is the possibility of offering health services downtown like dentists or urgent care?- university students and office workers use services like these
- Open space, parks and plazas are important downtown
- We need to create opportunities for live/work studios and office space for business start-ups
- Parking management is crucial- spaces should be used at all times

*Other Thoughts:*

- ◆ Discussion of traffic flow through downtown ensued, including benefits and disadvantages of conversion to two way traffic
- ◆ A study of loading zones downtown is currently being conducted
- ◆ McDowell and Dawson form a one way pair- this is reasonable because of the amount of traffic on those roads
- ◆ “Let’s not preclude two way streets from happening sometime in the future so that it can evolve with the next generation.”
- ◆ Smaller sites are better for retail
- ◆ Don’t design out so that spaces can’t be flexible in the future
- ◆ We should look into form based codes
- ◆ “Downtown is not a throughput, it’s a destination”
- ◆ We need to decide which streets are our ‘A’ streets and which streets are our service streets
- ◆ We need to be careful about the retail we add so that we don’t compete with Fayetteville St.

## **Session 7: Design Community**

*Key Attributes Now:*

- Existence of ‘City Living Room’ where we gather as a community
- Small town feel is important to keep
- Empty nesters and young professionals are looking at downtown as a great place to live

*Concerns:*

- New housing is too expensive
- Not enough people live downtown
- No place for young professionals to live downtown
- Downtown ends abruptly at railroad/MLK Blvd
- We don’t want to create a ‘Chain World’
- We need to be careful that we don’t create a vertical suburb



*What You Would Like to See:*

- Traffic should go through to BTI Center on Fayetteville St.
- We need a City 'Living Room'
- Because cities are about activity, that is what we would like to see here
- New developments must be multi-use and incorporate housing
- People should be able to do many things very close by
- Grocery store
- High rise condos should be included on site #1
- We need housing that 'urban pioneers' can afford- housing at \$120/square foot, not all of our housing can be at \$250/square foot
- We must define a path of travel from Warehouse District to Convention Center
- People mover from Centennial Campus to Convention Center
- We must carefully consider the character of Raleigh- are we going for Michigan Ave. or Franklin St.?
- We need to nurture the small town scale that Raleigh was founded on, though we have very big blocks
- The Convention Center will be one of several catalysts in the city that will support Raleigh's transformation
- We need rooftop activities
- Housing should be created first, then retail and restaurants will follow
- Many smaller developers would be preferable to one large developer
- These wouldn't necessarily be *small* developers, just developers working at a finer grain
- Diversity of designers, diversity of developers
- We need to reach out to people in the suburbs
- We need parks that people can walk through after dinner
- Connections to Dix, Farmer's Market, Centennial Campus
- Natural feature, like water
- The scale of Downtown should peak at Fayetteville Street and gradually decline towards the surrounding neighborhoods

*Other Thoughts:*

- ◆ Where will Convention Center cars park?
- ◆ Fayetteville St. can be closed block by block for festivals and other events
- ◆ "The great thing about cities is that there is so much going on."
- ◆ Housing consumes less parking spaces than office or retail
- ◆ The Convention Center in Seattle bridges I-5, creating strong connections
- ◆ How many restaurants can the downtown really support? Can the market really support this much development?
- ◆ 30,000 people a year move here
- ◆ 57% of residents come down here once a year or never- this is a huge untapped market

**Session 8: Neighborhoods**

*Key Attributes Now:*

- Strong arts and music opportunities
- Start-up companies are moving down here
- Vacancy rates for offices are at 5% downtown and have been for a while- vacancy rates have been hovering at 10% in the suburbs

*What You Would Like to See:*

- The Convention Center area should be a tourist attraction, both nationally and regionally
- The Convention Center area should be for Raleigh residents, regional visitors and national tourists
- We could be a Chatanooga, we don't want to be another Greensboro
- The Convention Center's focus is on a broad audience
- Charlotte's Third Ward is a thriving part of town and part of history
- We should create business magnets that will attract other businesses
- We need to create places that the whole community can embrace
- NC State Student Housing would be a valuable asset to downtown
- "We want for people to say that Raleigh has that really great \_\_\_\_\_"
- Jazz would be a great draw
- Juke joints, barbershops, stores
- Free activities- museums, biking
- New Yorkers who resettle here may be looking for great delis
- We need to employ urban strategies- to attract urban oriented people from around the city AND from other cities
- Small Mom and Pop scale would be preferable to the 'Mega Mall'
- Infill architecture
- Buildings that are active on the ground floor
- Fayetteville Street should continue through to the BTI Center
- We should allow high rise development
- Offices may do very well here, especially small start-up companies who are moving their businesses from their homes
- For office, we must be willing and able to compete with RTP, which the cities are hesitant to do
- A place to get a quick massage
- Have the developer make money by going high and this will subsidize the lower rent for retail space on the first floor
- Multi-use sites
- "Variety is the spice of life"
- Conservatory filled with flowers in front of the BTI Center
- Carolina Barbeque Restaurant that serves types of barbeque from all regions of North Carolina
- Basement bowling alley
- Soccer field on a roof
- Downtown Frisbee golf
- Indianapolis has a great urban mall- these need continuous demand to survive
- Exhibition Center to tell the RTP Technology story

- The following responses on what downtown Raleigh could be like came from a personal survey done by Lillian Thompson.

Restaurants:

Bring Yancy's back with better food,

Provide Soul Food Restaurants with decks

Seafood Restaurants

Ethnic Restaurants: Caribbean, Indian, Vietnamese, Middle Eastern in a Restaurant row

Cheesecake factory

French Bakery

A New York Deli

A Smoked Turkey Grill

Coffee (Café a la mode) shop

**Other:**

Independent Book Store with coffee and pastry/sit down areas

A child's Health Club

Adult Health Spa/club

Sports bar

Grocery store with cooking classes

Boutiques

Open Air Entertainment all around downtown

Movies/ Video store that rents/sells foreign flicks/ ethnic films from around the world and America

A Five and Ten Cents Store

**Entertainment:**

Shaw Jazz and Performance Club for live and DJ Jazz

Place for Ethnic Bands and Dancing

Black Entertainment

A Cabaret Club for Acts/African American Entertainment

*Other Thoughts:*

- ◆ “The idea here is that the community will tell the developers what to do rather than the other way around.”
- ◆ There is a proposal for Ligon Square along Blount St, near Shaw
- ◆ St. Joseph’s Foundation at the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham is an inspiring example of what can be done in revitalization
- ◆ Raleigh- the city in the trees